

# Images, history of town inspire exhibit

Artist creates  
vision of Duxbury  
from postcards  
and landscape

By Judith Montminy  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

**D**UXBURY — The "period piece" character of Duxbury's landscape and historic homes is the starting point for artist George Creamer's new installation at the Art Complex Museum.

Using four images of photocopied and enlarged antique postcards mounted in quilt-like form onto a translucent backing and suspended from the ceiling for "Landscape Under Construction, The intersection of cultural and natural forces in the Duxbury landscape," Creamer invites visitors to examine their surroundings and to question popular notions about history's cause and effect.

"Here is an interrogation, an investigation of some images and beliefs," Creamer said. "The Duxbury landscape bears testament to many forces, both manmade and natural, both generous and constraining. My installation attempts to prompt some considerations and questions about these forces and their assorted dynamics."

"I want to locate the past as it segues into the present and helps to determine the future. . . . I see this landscape as a site specific structure. . . . I see the interplay of man and nature," he said.

A large and compelling suspended image of a stormy Duxbury Beach, now revered for its natural beauty and preservation, invites the questions Creamer hopes viewers will ponder.

"Storms determined the character of the beach area," he said. "Nature intervened in a very timely fashion . . . in the 1880s, just after the owners of Duxbury Beach, the Wright family, had completed a bridge linking the beach and Powder Point. The Wrights, who were major benefactors to the town, planned to sell 263 plots. Some of the parcels had been paid for in advance to help finance construction of the bridge. However, two winter storms in quick succession rendered the project impractical, and only three cottages were built. . . . It was during this period in the 19th century that similar shorefront ventures thrived in adjacent towns such as Marshfield, where this era witnessed a rapid growth of beachfront settlement."

"One wonders to what extent this natural intervention ultimately determined the character of present-day Duxbury," Creamer said.

Economic intervention also plays a role in the construction of the landscape, the artist proposes.

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GEORGE  
CREAMER

# Postcards inspired art exhibit

## ■ DUXBURY

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His oversized reproduction of a historic view of Washington Street – an area known for its stately homes and water views – shows the historic street with buildings recognizable today. Some attribute the preservation to the 19th-century residents' foresight. Others may consider a different cause.

Extensive remodeling of the prized Federal and Greek Revival houses, or succeeding architectural styles, are not in evidence, because the town's economy stagnated following the departure of the shipbuilders to deep-water ports, Creamer suggests.

The four-part installation is divided into Suburb, Washington Street, Tall Ships and Mother Nature correlating to four postcards: Powder Point, Duxbury Bay, Snug Harbor and Duxbury Beach. The scrim-like translucency of the images beckons viewers to enter the images and imagine themselves at the historic sites in the present as well as the past.

"We all see the same thing, but what we take from it is different," Creamer said. He conducted an informal survey to learn about residents' attitudes toward the town and its environs before beginning the project to make sure he considered different points of view.

"He's uncovering assumptions we all make when we look at art and landscape," said Lisa Weber Greenberg, the museum's curator. Creamer's exhibit is the first she has ushered into the Duxbury museum since she arrived last year. She became familiar with his installations when she worked at the DeCordova Museum and welcomed his proposal to create a site-specific piece for the Duxbury museum, using the town's landscape as the focal point.

"Like a lot of contemporary artists, he's interested in going beneath the surface and exploring what the images mean," she said.

Like the landscape he is examining, Creamer's own installation has gone through several stages.

Last summer when he began the project, he took pictures, drew sketches and created computer manipulated images of Duxbury scenes. He also struggled with the exhibition space itself, trying to ignore the limitations of the white walls and to incorporate the strong, curved lines of the ceiling.

Creamer decided to incorporate the ceiling lines as a metaphor for waves of the ocean. By suspending his sail-like black and white postcard reproductions from the ceiling and anchoring them to the floor with rope and cement blocks suggesting mooring devices, he was able to extend the ocean's strong community presence inside the museum.

His research at the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society and the assistance of its director, Alexandra

## FYI

Through Sept. 8, "Landscape Under Construction" by George Creamer at The Art Complex Museum, 189 Alden St., Duxbury.

July 14, 1-4 p.m., opening reception; the artist will speak at 2 p.m.

July 23-26 for children ages 7 and up: Creamer will lead a workshop examining Duxbury today and comparing it with the past. Registration required. \$45 fee, includes supplies.

Also at the museum:

"Kindred Spirits" the Eloquence of Function in American Shaker and Japanese Arts of Daily Life" through Sept. 8; "More Specific, Site-Specific Outdoor Sculpture Invitational" through Oct. 27.

Museum hours are Wednesday through Sunday 1-4 p.m. Admission is free. Call (617) 934-6634.

Earle, helped direct Creamer's path, he said.

"The images were so staggering," he said of the old postcards.

By photocopying and enlarging each postcard thousands of times, Creamer joined the historic image with modern technology, further emphasizing the relationship between the past and the present.

He acknowledges that the past he portrays helps perpetuate some of the myths that he is trying to question.

Views of the communities and lives of Duxbury's middle class are absent from the exhibit.

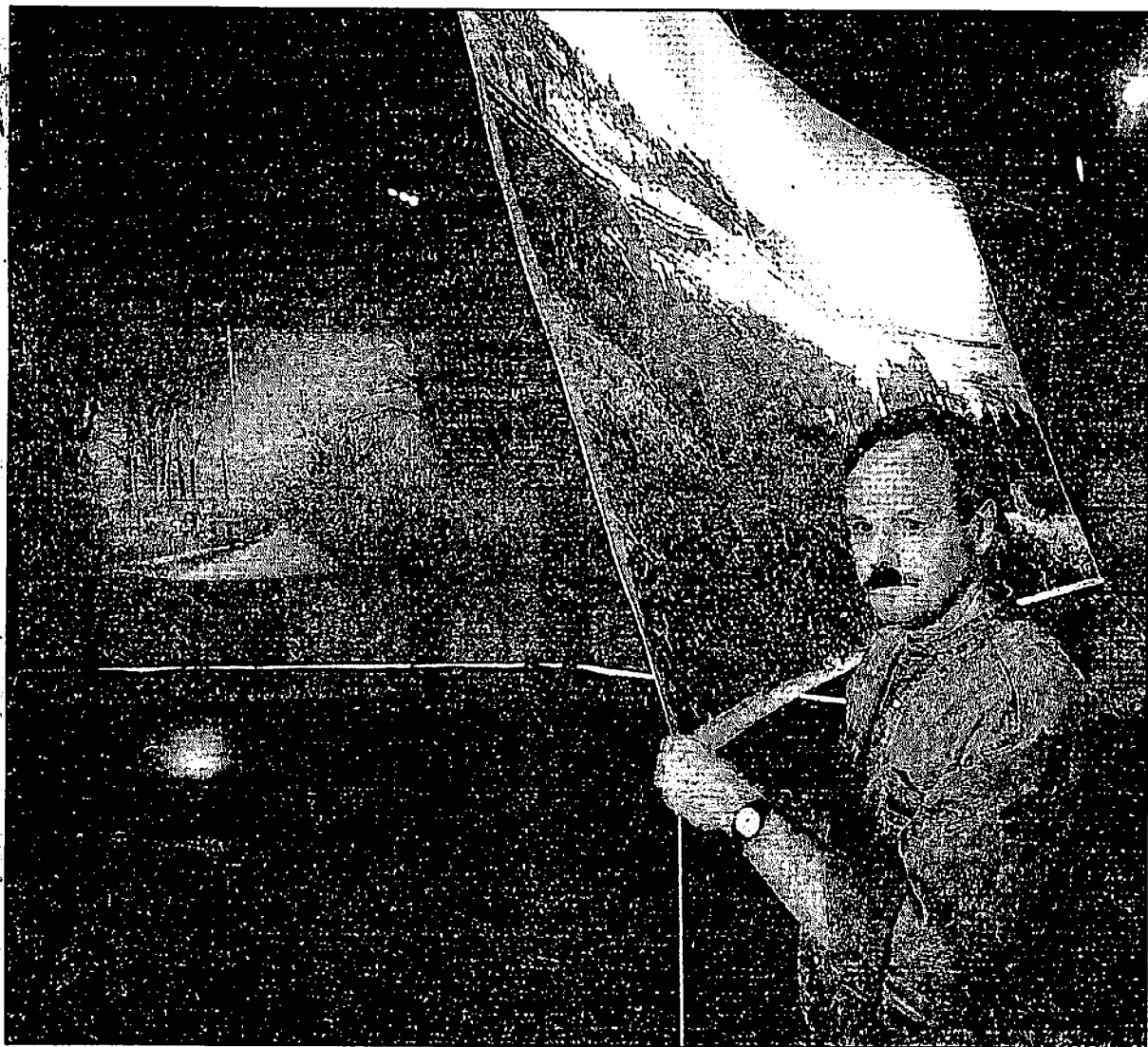
"The other parts of Duxbury, in terms of the visual, the information wasn't as resonant," he said. "They didn't make postcards of those sites," he said, admitting that the classic images of the town have "seduced" him.

"My main emphasis is trying to unearth some questions," Creamer said. "Political, economic and cultural forces intersect here.

"To put those forces into play and realize history is not an enshrined series of events," is the aim.

It is the questions that people take away with them that are important, he said.

In touring his latest work, Creamer repeats the W.J.T. Mitchell quote that permeates his Duxbury installation: "Landscape is best understood as a medium of cultural expression, not a genre of painting or fine art."



GLOBE STAFF PHOTO / TOM LANDERS

**Postcard images, enlarged many times over, hang from the ceiling like sails in George Creamer's exhibit.**